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EASTERN EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCER

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17 July 1972Floods Strike Two Areas of Yugoslavia

Severe rains over the last few days in Slovenia and Macedonia threaten agricultural output. In western Macedonia along the Albanian border, roads and communications are disrupted due to land slides and several local communes report both crop and livestock losses. At the other end of Yugoslavia, in eastern Slovenia, the Mura River is threatening to overflow its banks following six days of heavy rains. Some areas are under water as a few small tributaries have flooded, but in general the dikes are holding. Authorities indicate that should the levies and dikes break, the worst flooding in over thirty years would result.

The Struggle Goes On

More than seven months after President Tito purged Croatian nationalists from that republic's party and state leadership, Yugoslavia is still grappling with what to do about the disruptive force of regional nationalism. In Croatia itself, the mood is still one of gloom. The general public has not recovered from the shock of the magnitude of the purge. Even worse, federal prosecutors have yet to produce evidence that the republic's leaders had foreign ties--the charge which triggered Tito's action.

For the first time since the events of last December, however, the party appeared at last week's presidium session to be making some progress in the struggle. All leaders still agree that the bulk of the work lies ahead--that it will be a long, protracted struggle and finally that if regional nationalism is to be overcome the most important battleground will be at the grass-roots level. The presidium, in two days of soul searching, ended with a call to battle in every quarter of Yugoslavia. Each republic and province is to stamp out nationalism wherever it is found--in the schools, the arts, the churches, in the trade unions, mass organizations and in the party itself. The session ended by adopting a lengthy analysis of the problems and program of action, which defines "nationalism" (regional) in the broadest possible terms--the common ideological and political platform which "gathers together all that is reactionary, anti-democratic and anti-self-management."

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The party program, however, contains a serious flaw, as well as an error of omission. First, the ominous expression of determination to weed-out nationalists from the schools, the arts and the churches could, in the hands of party hacks, become a witch hunt against all liberals. Freedom of expression in Yugoslavia has become a hallmark of the country's reforms. Any hint of a major retreat in this area could have negative consequences in popular support and understanding for the decentralized system Tito is attempting to build as the structure that will survive his passing. Second, the party gives only a passing nod to the country's economic problems. On this point the federal party presidium fell short of the candor of the Serb presidium, which in a session earlier this month flatly asserted that as long as economic disparities exist there is no hope of resolving the nationality problem.

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The presidium, in appointing a twenty-four member committee to draft a platform and program for the 10th LCY Congress, announced the struggle against nationalism will hold center stage when the congress convenes in 1974.

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New Role of Yugoslav Mass Organization

A new revolutionary role in the political life of Yugoslavia is in store for the mass organization, the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Yugoslavia (SAWPY). Speaking to the SAWPY federal conference on 11 July, the organization's President, Veljko Milatovic, described what lies ahead after the second set of constitutional amendments are adopted later this year.

Yugoslavia, according to Milatovic, has already "chosen social ownership, a market economy, self-management and the distribution of income according to work," and now seeks a new political life which makes both a one party and a multi-party political system obsolete. Expanding on his remarks, Milatovic further asserted that the pending amendments will stress the important role of all sociopolitical organizations as well. SAWPY specifically will be charged with the task of insuring a direct expression of social and national interests. Through its open forums, SAWPY will guarantee freedom of expression to all Yugoslav citizens. Moreover, SAWPY will apparently have "political initiative"--possible by running its own candidates for political office.

SAWPY already is the forum for genuine political debate, most recently in its handling of the public discussion of the first set of constitutional amendments last year. Presumably it will also do so on the second set. There have

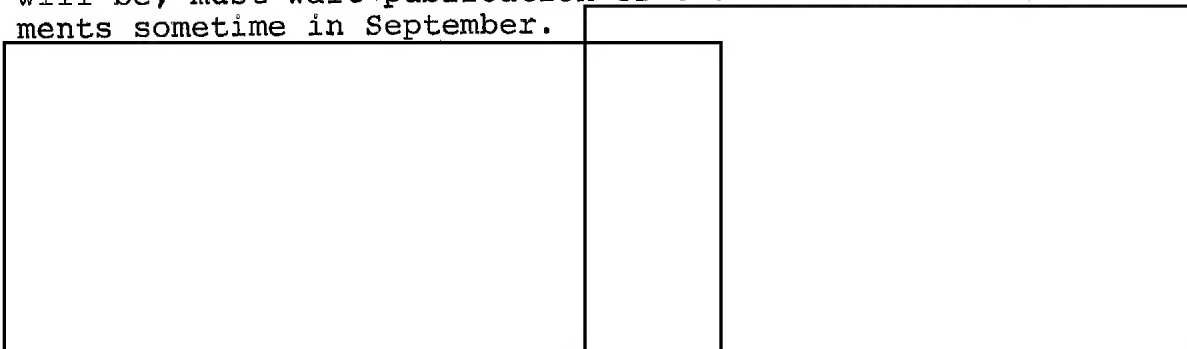
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been calls in the past for turning SAWPY into an opposition party--most notably from former Federal Assembly President, the late Milentije Popovic. Final judgement, however, on just how significant the changes in SAWPY's political role will be, must wait publication of the constitutional amendments sometime in September.

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